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Reagan urges approval of arms aid for contras

By David Hess

Inquirer Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — President Reagan, declaring that "you can't fight attack helicopters with Band-Aids and mosquito nets," pressed congressional leaders yesterday to push through a \$100 million aid package to the rebels fighting the Nicaraguan government.

The bulk of the money, about \$70 million, would pay for military supplies — including portable anti-aircraft weapons — to counter what administration officials said was "a massive influx" of Soviet and Cuban arms to the Sandinista government that rules the Central American country.

At meetings with two groups of congressional leaders, Reagan and his top national security advisers said the rebels, or contras, face prob-

able defeat unless they are provided with arms to mount "effective resistance" to the Sandinistas.

Last year, Congress denied Reagan's request to resume supplying weapons to the contras, voting instead to provide \$27 million of "humanitarian," or nonlethal, assistance.

There is still strong resistance, particularly in the House, to sending weapons to the rebels. Some members of Congress fear that the United States could be drawn into the conflict.

Nevertheless, Reagan insisted yesterday that he not only be authorized to ship \$70 million worth of arms to the contras but also be given a free hand in administering the program.

One administration official said later that the CIA would be employed to dispense the equipment and train the rebels in its use. In 1985, Congress expressly prohibited the CIA from being involved in the U.S. effort.

White House and congressional officials said Reagan wanted the arms shipments to be a "covert," or concealed, operation. Present nonlethal aid is shipped openly through Honduras, which has become touchy about being seen as a contra ally in the guerrilla war against neighboring Nicaragua.

In conferring with the congressional leaders, Reagan and his top advisers — including Secretary of State George P. Shultz, Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger and CIA director William J. Casey — conveyed a sense of urgency about the need for the aid, according to congressional and White House sources.

The current aid program expires on March 31, one White House official said, and there is "a need to address the issue now."

Additionally, there have been recurring reports that the rebels' morale and combat capability have suffered because of heavy casualties exacted by the Sandinistas. Soviet-supplied helicopter gunships have routed rebels in battles and driven them from camps in the Nicaraguan interior.

Reagan indicated to the congressional leaders that he is prepared to appeal to the American voters over the next few weeks in an effort to win approval of his aid request.

White House officials said Reagan will push for the contra aid package both in an address he is expected to make during a trip to the island of Grenada (where a Marxist government was overthrown in 1983 by U.S. troops) on Thursday and in a nationally televised speech to the nation Feb. 26 on defense issues.

At the White House, spokesman Larry Speakes said the administration had not ruled out diplomatic negotiations with the Sandinistas to end the guerrilla war and to establish a democratic government in Nicaragua.

But he said that every time the United States and other nations in the hemisphere tried to enter into serious negotiations, the Sandinistas "stalled."

Denying that the United States' aim was to overthrow the Sandinistas by force, Speakes said, "It doesn't have to be an overthrow. It has to be a living up [by the Sandinistas] to [democratic] principles and an end of repression of the democratic resistance and an opportunity for very basic freedoms."

At the same time, Speakes acknowledged that the chief U.S. objective in the region is "to stop a communist foothold on the mainland of the Americas."

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Reagan says five nations push terror

By David Hess
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WASHINGTON — President Reagan contended yesterday that a "confederation of criminal governments" was engaged in terrorist acts of war against the United States and that this country had a legal right to defend itself.

In perhaps his toughest speech about international terrorism, he named Cuba, Libya, Iran, North Korea and Nicaragua as partners in an effort to "expel America from the world." The Soviet Union, he observed, has a "close relationship" with "almost all" of those nations.

But, in a speech to the annual convention of the American Bar Association, he stopped short of disclosing a plan to combat state-sponsored terrorism. Instead, he asked the lawyers to help him construct a "legal framework for dealing with terrorism" and craft new laws to permit direct and indirect action against the culprits.

"There can be no place on Earth left where it is safe for these monsters to rest or train or practice their cruel and deadly skills," Reagan said. "We must act together, or unilaterally if necessary, to ensure that terrorists have no sanctuary, anywhere."

He cited the hijacking of Trans World Airlines Flight 847, the June 19 murders of U.S. Marines and civilians in El Salvador and other recent terrorist acts as "part of a pattern, the work of a confederation of terrorist states."

The terrorists, Reagan said, "are being trained, financed and directly or indirectly controlled by a core

group of radical and totalitarian governments, a new international version of Murder Inc. And all of these states are united by one simple, criminal phenomenon: their fanatical hatred of the United States, our people, our way of life, our international stature."

He said their aim was to force the United States to "retreat, retrench, to become 'Fortress America.' Their real goal is to expel America from the world."

Reagan declared that the "American people are not — I repeat, not — going to tolerate intimidation, terror and outright acts of war against this nation and its people. And we are especially not going to tolerate these attacks from outlaw states run by the strangest collection of misfits, looney tunes and squalid criminals since the advent of the Third Reich."

In citing Nicaragua and North Korea, he named two countries that have not been listed by the State Department as supporters of international terrorism. He did not include Syria and South Yemen, which are on the list.

White House officials would not elaborate on Reagan's listing other than to note that "the President was highlighting the states most prominent in recent months in terrorist activity."

But Reagan has expressed anger at Nicaragua almost from the day he took office in 1981. He has branded the Sandinista government there as part of an international conspiracy bent on spreading communist revolution throughout Central America, and he has directed the CIA and the Defense Department to provide arms

and other aid to anti-Sandinista guerrillas in Nicaragua and to neighboring anti-communist countries.

The Nicaraguan Embassy in Washington took issue with the President's characterization of its government. It said the Sandinistas "condemn any and all forms of terrorism, among other reasons because our people are suffering the scourge of U.S. state terrorism, openly promoted by the administration and executed through the CIA and the U.S.-created contra groups."

In not mentioning Syria, the President apparently wanted to cool the frictions between that country and the United States.

Syrian President Hafez Assad helped to win release last week of 39 Americans held hostage by Shiite militants in Lebanon, and his help is being sought in winning freedom for seven other Americans kidnapped there over the last 15 months.

Acknowledging yesterday that Americans differ about how to deal with terrorism, Reagan said, "No foreign power should mistake disagreement

for disunity." History, he said, is "littered with the wreckage of regimes who made the mistake of underestimating the vigor and will of the American people. . . ."

But he provided no explicit directions for coping with the terrorist threat. Asked what Reagan had in mind, Robert C. McFarlane, the White House national security adviser, said his words were "a conceptual look at the problem" and an effort to identify the "roots" of terrorism.

There seemed little doubt, however, that Reagan was trying to build a case for more direct responses to terrorist acts, both among Americans and among U.S. allies.

The scope of the problem, he said, has steadily increased, with the number of terrorist acts rising to more than 600 last year from 500 in 1983.

In 1983, Reagan said, the CIA found Iranian complicity in 57 terrorist acts. Since September, he added, Iranian-backed terrorists have launched almost 30 attacks, while

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